



THE ST. AUGUSTINE REPORT

Local news in our Nation's Oldest City



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Observation platform on Matanzas River House plan seeks PZB approval today

"There sits the River House - our community's living room - and to the east is a wide, inviting observation platform, fully accessible to ALL!!!"

That's the vision of Council on Aging Executive Director Cathy Brown as plans for a 1,320 square foot observation platform over the Matanzas River at the recently opened River House go before our Planning and Zoning Board (PZB) today.

"The waterfront has all been gobbled up, in private hands," Cathy says, "except this last available waterfront acre. This observation platform will be a way - with an accessible path from the River House - to be on the River...luxuriating in all its beauty!"

The proposed platform seeks approval as a Conservation Overlay Zone Development. The board session begins at 2 p.m. in the Alcazar Room at City Hall.



Improvements on tap in our Historic District

Better economy or preparations for our commemorations - whichever, a lot of plans are afoot in our historic district.

Our Historic Architectural Review Board (HARB) recently reviewed plans for five properties, including:

- Rhett's St. Augustine, LLC, 66 Hypolita Street (the former Panache Salon adjacent to Scarlett O'Hara's), replacing existing doors and windows with wood and glass panel sliding doors, and exterior gas light fixtures. Owner John Arbizzani plans a piano bar.
- George Arnold, 22 Avenida Menendez (former Casa de la Paz), new windows, doors, railings, light fixtures, fences and gates, balconies and exterior ornamentations. Arnold has been negotiating with HARB for months on acceptable modifications.
- Donna Lee Parks, 18 St. George Street, removing a portion of a wall and installing a gate.
- City of St. Augustine, Aviles Street from King Street to Artillery Lane, landscaping features, expanded sidewalks, and installation of light fixtures and banners. This is in the redesign of Aviles Street,

Drake's Raid reenactment

Sir Francis Drake once again raids St. Augustine next weekend.

Living history interpreters will demonstrate 16th century weapons and drills at The Fountain of Youth Park Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., and reenact Drake's looting and burning of the town at 7 p.m. in our Plaza de la Constitución and surrounding areas.

All events, drawn from histories of the actual raid in June, 1586, are free and open to the public.

*Engraving by Italian artist
Baptista Boazio, oldest known
map showing original St.
Augustine town plan of 1573,
rebuilt after Drake's raid and still
existing today.*

which will include sidewalk cafes - a first in our city on a public way.
· City of St. Augustine, 29 St. George Street, paving, landscaping and fencing at our Colonial Spanish Quarter, part of our Heritage Department business plan.

Describing city operations

Public Affairs Director Paul Williamson takes to the airwaves Wednesdays and Saturdays on Flagler College's WFCF, 88.5 FM, interviewing city departments on their operations. The program is at 5:30 p.m. Wednesdays and re-aired at 8 a.m. Saturdays.

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Previous Issues

Living history at Freedom Trail lunch

"Twenty years ago this week my father was killed in action on an island in the Pacific fighting for the freedom of his family, his country, his world...I was born on the same day he died...and it's fitting that I am now fighting for the same thing."

A letter by a 19-year-old pre-med student at Duke University, written from the St. Johns County jail after her arrest with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., on the steps of the Monson Motor Lodge in June, 1964.

[Kathryn Fentress](#), today a PhD psychologist in Bellingham, WA, specializing in healing trauma, will be a guest speaker at the 4th Annual ACCORD Freedom Trail Luncheon July 2 at the Casa Monica Hotel. Keynote speaker is



Fentress stands between Ralph Abernathy and Monson Owner James Ponce.





Fentress

Congressman John Lewis, an early Freedom Rider, Chairman of Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and, since 1987, Georgia's 5th (Atlanta) Congressional District representative.

Tickets for the luncheon are \$45 until June 15, then \$50. VIP tickets are \$60. Contact Audrey Willis (904) 829-3996, Elizabeth Duncan (904) 347-1382 or visit The 40th ACCORD [website](#).

Gullah Festival revives forgotten history

Among the Memorial Day activities around our nation was one in Beaufort SC - along with a message we're all too familiar with: *Beaufort County must tell its historic role even better* (substitute St. Johns County).

The 24th Annual Gullah Festival of South Carolina was held last weekend, celebrating and recognizing the history, customs, cultures, language and accomplishments of the African Americans of the low-country.

Beaufort's [Island Packet](#) tells the story of the Gullah Geechee Heritage Corridor, which extends from Wilmington NC to Jacksonville, and one day, if a local team led by Derek Hankerson is successful, may include St. Augustine and Fort Mose.



Gullah Festival dancer
Beaufort Gazette photo

History's Highlights

Drake's Raid - A Test of Survival

One in a series of historic features as we prepare for our commemorations, drawn from research by George Gardner.

5 years, 3 months, and 8 days to St. Augustine's 450th anniversary

June 7, 1586. Historian Michael Gannon suggests the watchtower erected on the shore to guide Spanish supply ships was St. Augustine's first public works project - and a poor choice. For it was that watchtower that guided the enemy in.

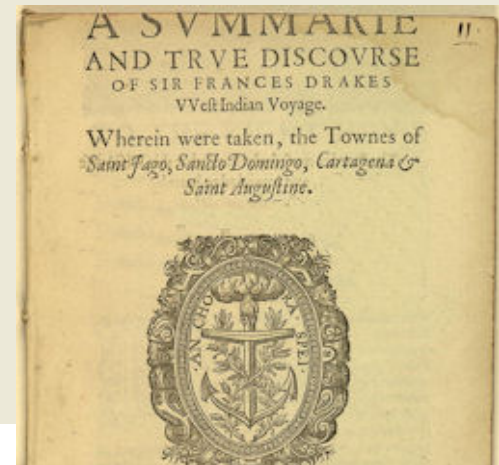
By some accounts there were 23 warships and nineteen smaller ships, with 2,300 men aboard, overkill for the tiny garrison at St. Augustine - 80 soldiers under Governor Pedro Menendez Marques, a nephew of St. Augustine founder Pedro Menendez who died twelve years earlier.

Sir Francis Drake, England's most celebrated seaman of the Elizabethan Age, was in command of that fleet, returning home after terrorizing the Caribbean to disrupt preparations for a Spanish Armada.

Marques ordered some 250 women and children in the humble village to gather what they could and hide in the forest, while his garrison turned their cannons on 1,000 English troops storming across Anastasia Island.

Marques held off the attackers most of the day until finally, under cover of night, he ordered his force to the woods with the garrison's weapons and flags.

While the Spanish defenders were occupied with the English attackers, neighboring Indians looted the abandoned village. Drake's troops finished the job, stomping down fruit trees and planted gardens, then setting fire to the entire



settlement, including the fort - the seventh built in the 21 years since St. Augustine's founding.

As Sir Francis Drake's sails disappeared over the horizon, the settlers and soldiers trudged out of the forest to find nothing left. But rather than abandon the settlement, the Spanish command ordered Santa Elena to the north abandoned and its people moved to St. Augustine to strengthen this garrison.

And the Indians, who could now easily overpower these foreigners, instead returned many of the goods they had looted, and helped them rebuild their lives.

Fourteen years after Drake's raid, the Spanish government conducted an inquiry as to whether there was enough value in St. Augustine to continue efforts to keep it alive. Ironically, the inquiry favored abandoning the garrison, but a lack of funds and initiative kept it from happening.

And so an eighth fort was built, and later a ninth, before a soft but sturdy stone made of coquina was discovered on Anastasia Island, and another pirate raid, in 1668, inspired the Spanish authorities to make use of that stone.

The result is today's Castillo de San Marcos, destined never to fall to an enemy in battle.

Picture: The first English edition of Walter Bigges narrative, 1589, from [Library of Congress](#)



The St. Augustine Report is published by the Department of Public Affairs of the City of St. Augustine each Tuesday and on Fridays previewing City Commission meetings. The Report is written and distributed by George Gardner, former St. Augustine Mayor (2002-2006) and Commissioner (2006-2008) and a longtime newspaper reporter and editor. Contact The Report at gardner@aug.com

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